

A Guide to Peer Mentoring at Community Synagogue of Rye

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Why Peer Mentoring?

Creating a community of collaborators is an important focus for the faculty of the Center for Jewish Learning at Community Synagogue. The best way to create powerful, innovative learning, we know, is to learn from and with our colleagues. By creating a system of peer mentoring, faculty members will have the opportunity to learn from and with those teachers (members of the Professional Learning Team) who are most experienced with the work of LOMED.

Members of the Professional Learning Team (PLT) have been exposed to a number of resources through Yachdav, Living and Learning, and PLT meetings. You are in a position of having experience planning and implementing powerful learning, specifically through the use of whole person learning. You understand how powerful a lesson can be when it takes into account what students will know, what they will do, what they will believe, and how they will feel a sense of belonging. More than giving your learners pieces of knowledge or the ability to perform certain skills, you know that using whole person learning as the basis for lesson planning will help you guide your learners on their journey of applying Jewish teaching to their daily lives.

By sharing your understanding of whole person learning with your fellow teachers, you are helping to make the Center for Jewish Learning at Community Synagogue a place where teachers feel a sense of collaboration and innovation.

Outcomes of Peer Mentoring

1. Teachers will develop a sense of collaboration when lesson planning
2. Teachers will develop a sense of collegiality when it comes to sharing successes and challenges of their teaching
3. Mentors will feel empowered to take a leadership role among the faculty
4. Mentees will gain an understanding of whole person learning and be able to integrate it into their lesson planning practice

The Steps of Peer Mentoring

Step One: Pre-Meeting

Mentor and mentee meet to workshop the lesson plan.

Step Two: Observation A

Mentor spends a set amount of time observing mentee's lesson.

Step Three: Post-Meeting

Mentor and mentee meet to evaluate and reflect on the lesson.

Bonus Step: Observation B

Mentee observes another teacher's powerful lesson

Step One: Pre-Meeting

Mentor and mentee meet to workshop the lesson plan.

The goal of the pre-meeting is for the mentor and the mentee to workshop the mentee's lesson plan so that it is representative of powerful learning. The mentee should leave this meeting feeling prepared to teach the lesson, and the mentor should leave this meeting feeling prepared to observe the lesson.

The mentee should come to this meeting with a prepared, complete lesson plan. If possible, the mentee should email a copy of the lesson plan to you in advance of this meeting. This lesson plan should include noticing targets (outcomes written for each of the four domains), and should be written according to the CJL's template for lesson planning (attached to this guide).

The pre-meeting should take no more than an hour.

During this meeting, your role as the mentor is to facilitate a discussion about alignment between noticing targets and learning activities. It's important that the mentee understands the language of whole person learning/noticing targets in *general* terms before delving in to its application in her lesson plan.

A reminder about whole person learning and noticing targets...

Knowing: Names the essential Jewish knowledge and skills that learners will acquire in a unit of learning so they can participate in a real life Jewish experience or practice.	<i>Ask Yourself:</i> What are the knowledge and skills learners will gain in this lesson?	<i>For example:</i> Learners will be able to identify the 7 species that are traditionally eaten on Tu B'Shvat.
Doing/Living: Names the authentic Jewish life experience or practice.	<i>Ask Yourself:</i> What are the real life Jewish experiences (broadly defined) that learners will be able to participate in after this lesson?	<i>For example:</i> Learners will be able to recite the <i>brachot</i> of the Passover seder.
Believing/Valuing: Names the core belief and/or values that students will be able to explore, and articulate their own perspectives and understandings.	<i>Ask Yourself:</i> What will learners value after this lesson?	<i>For example:</i> Learners will understand that the value of <i>hachnasat orchim</i> is one core value of Sukkot.
Belonging: Names the opportunities for caring, purposeful connections to others, to God, and to Am Yisrael.	<i>Ask Yourself:</i> To what/to whom will learners feel a sense of belonging after this lesson?	<i>For example:</i> Learners will identify themselves as part of a community that studies text together.

It is important that the mentor provide ideas and feedback sensitively. The mentee should walk away from this meeting feeling comfortable with teaching the lesson, so it's important that when you give ideas, you leave room for the mentee's own creativity. For the peer mentoring process to be successful, the mentee must feel ownership over the lesson plan. You should ensure that you are checking for understanding – ensuring that the mentee sees the connection between the noticing targets and the learning activities – throughout the pre-meeting.

Keep in mind that in addition to whole person learning alignment, your role as a peer mentor includes promoting and encouraging the use of engaging learning methods. Whether you were inspired by Explora-Torah's unique methods of teaching texts, or you think engaging students by starting with their own cultural interests (a la Keshet Keff) is an interesting approach, use your pre-meeting as an opportunity to encourage teachers to explore these options.

A Checklist for Alignment...

- ☐ Knowing noticing target(s) is/are clearly articulated
- ☐ Doing noticing target(s) is/are clearly articulated
- ☐ Believing noticing target(s) is/are clearly articulated
- ☐ Belonging noticing target(s) is/are clearly articulated
- ☐ Learning activities align with knowing noticing target(s)
- ☐ Learning activities align with doing noticing target(s)
- ☐ Learning activities align with believing noticing target(s)
- ☐ Learning activities align with belonging noticing target(s)
- ☐ Noticing targets and learning activities align with the priority goal
- ☐ Learning activities utilize engaging techniques

Please note that hitting all 4 domains in a single lesson can be a challenge. In fact, noticing targets are often easier to achieve if they are spread across a unit as opposed to a single lesson.

You should end the pre-meeting with your mentee by discussing what you'll be focusing on during the observation. You may choose to focus on alignment between all 4 of the domains, but you may also want to focus on only 1 or 2 domains, depending on your mentee's area(s) of strength. Try to challenge your mentee to choose to focus on a domain (or domains) that has been difficult for them in the past.

Take a few minutes at the end of the pre-meeting to determine when you will observe the lesson take place. It is also helpful to set a date for your post-meeting. The post-meeting should not take more than an hour.

Step Two: Observation A

Mentor spends a set amount of time observing mentee's lesson.

The goal of the observation is for the mentor to observe the mentee teach the lesson that they have prepared collaboratively. The mentee should leave the observation feeling supported and encouraged by the mentor, and the mentor should leave the observation feeling that she has gathered enough evidence to provide constructive feedback to the mentee in the post-meeting.

If more edits have been made to the lesson plan before the date of the observation, the mentee should send an updated copy to the mentor. The mentor should come to the observation having read through the lesson plan in its final state.

Everyone has a different way of taking notes while observing. One option is coming prepared with a piece of paper with 2 columns; one for the observations themselves and one for questions and commentary (see attached template).

Your table may look like this:

Observations	Commentary/Questions
<i>Desks in rows, T's desk in the corner</i>	<i>T spent minimal time sitting in desk, moved around among Ss often</i>
<i>S asks about Noah story from last class, T: "let's review from last time before we move on."</i>	<i>T uses S's question as a cue to make connections from one class to the next</i>

During the observation itself, you should only write in the left column (observations). This column should contain only factual information – T (teacher) said X, Ss (students) did X activity, etc. It's tempting to write in your commentary and questions as the class goes along, however things move quickly, and it's a better use of your observation time to simply focus on noting your straightforward observations. It's good to have your area(s) of focus (which you determined during your pre-meeting) in mind throughout your observation, but it's best to take copious notes during the observation so that you'll have a record of everything. This will be helpful when you fill in the right column (questions and commentary).

Some teachers may find it less stressful to have a peer observe them as opposed to their supervisor, but keep in mind that being observed can be stressful, especially for veteran teachers. For that reason, when your set observation time is over, take a few minutes to provide your mentee with a few positive words. If the end of the observation doesn't coincide with the end of the class itself, leaving a note is fine.

You should dedicate the 15 minutes *immediately following the observation* to fill in the right column (commentary/questions). Note that it is not necessary to have commentary or questions for each of your observations; now is the time to narrow in on your focus.

After filling in your questions and commentary, take some time to summarize your thoughts, using the prompts found in the observation template.

Step Three: Post-Meeting

Mentor and mentee meet to evaluate and reflect on the lesson.

The goal for the post-meeting is for the mentor and the mentee to reflect on the lesson using a protocol. The mentee should leave this meeting feeling prepared to continue the work of integrating LOMED practices into her teaching. The mentor should leave this meeting feeling prepared to continue supporting her mentee in this process. If possible, the post-meeting should take place within one week after the observation.

The mentor should come to this meeting prepared to provide constructive feedback according to a protocol. The mentee should come to this meeting prepared to reflect on her teaching.

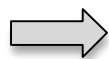
Peer Mentoring Evaluation Protocol

- I. Mentee presents the lesson plan as review. Mentee highlights those aspects of the lesson that were successful, and those that presented challenges. (5 minutes)
- II. Mentor shares warm and cool feedback from her observation. (5 minutes)
- III. Mentee and mentor pick together one area of challenge to discuss more in-depth. Mentor then leads a brainstorming session around this area. Mentor and mentee both provide ideas. (15 minutes)
- IV. Mentee provides a summary of the brainstorming, including a concrete plan for integrating feedback into future lessons. (5 minutes)

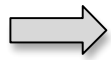
During this protocol, your role as mentor is to focus on one specific topic, most likely alignment between one (or more) of the domains. You are not expected (and it isn't necessarily your place) to comment on aspects such as classroom management, unless it is in some way related to your area of focus. Similarly, as the mentor you should direct your mentee to focus on that area of focus throughout the protocol, as she may be tempted to stray off topic.

Many people assume that the only helpful feedback is that which (constructively) addresses the challenges of the lesson (cool feedback). In fact, especially in a peer mentoring situation, providing positive (warm) feedback is crucial. Warm feedback helps to ensure a positive relationship between the mentor and the mentee, and it creates an environment in which cooler feedback is more readily accepted.

Don't forget to end your feedback with a highlight!



When giving warm feedback, "It was great that your learners reached the 'X' noticing target" isn't as helpful as "When your learners participated in X learning activity, you set them up to reach the 'X' noticing target you had set."



When giving cool feedback, “It would have been better if X” is not as helpful as “What might it have looked like if you had tried X?” or “What would be the value in trying it X way next time?”

Always keep in mind the concept of “**successing out**” – highlighting successes – which reminds us that *only by identifying successes will we be able to recreate them.*

Bonus Step: Observation B

Mentee observes another teacher’s powerful lesson

Time permitting, each mentee will have the opportunity to observe another teacher’s powerful lesson. This is an opportunity for each teacher to step outside of their own teaching and their own curriculum, to explore how powerful learning is happening in other classrooms at Community Synagogue. Teachers should walk away from this observation having been exposed to new options for learning activities that align with noticing targets and ideas for engaging learning. The mentee will not necessarily observe her mentor, although that is an option.

Documentation

During your pre- and post-meetings, please ask your mentee to evaluate her own understanding and integration of LOMED principles (attached to this guide). This will help us understand the impact peer mentoring may have on the mentees.

After you have completed a full cycle of peer mentoring (pre-meeting, observation, and post-meeting), please complete the “Documenting Success” form (attached to this guide). This will allow all PLT members to celebrate the successes you have with your mentee(s).

Peer Mentoring Logistics

Time Frame:

1. PLT members will submit a LOMED-aligned powerful learning plan following the attached template, due to Shana and Laurie by January 5th. Shana and Laurie will provide feedback over email. If you change your powerful learning plan before the January 12th meeting, please re-resend it to Shana to be copied for the PLT meeting.
2. The January 12th PLT meeting will focus on workshopping these powerful lesson plans. We will also have the opportunity to discuss this guide, as well as make some group decisions regarding the peer mentoring program.

3. After the January 29th professional learning with Explora-Torah, PLT members will begin work as peer mentors. Teachers will be expected to create and teach 3 powerful lesson plans.

Suggested Grade Assignments:

- Jes N. and Joslyn – Hebrew teachers (tefillah)
- Stefanie and Joan – Kindergarten-3rd grade
- Jessie G. and Shanna – 4th-6th grade